

Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security and Foreign Policy by Zeev Maoz. University of Michigan Press, 2006, 728 pp., \$45.00.

While there are numerous books on Israel's foreign and security policy, this offering by Zeev Maoz is surely the most comprehensive and analytical of them all. Maoz, currently professor of political science at the University of California at Davis and former faculty member at several Israeli institutions, is a prolific contributor to discussions about Israeli security matters along with more general works on war and conflict. This book may stand as the magnum opus of his distinguished career.

Maoz wrote this book to address what he claims is an uncritical attitude in Israel and beyond regarding Israeli security doctrine and practice. Given that Israel is the most conflict-prone state in modern history, Maoz argues that it is essential to question some of the most basic assumptions about Israeli security policy. This is particularly the case regarding the tragically commonplace Israeli assumption that war is the most appropriate instrument for dealing with intractable foes. However, Maoz finds that none of the wars that Israel initiated (1956, 1967, and the Lebanon wars) were wars of necessity.

For Maoz, the 1956 Suez war originated because of obsessive Israeli fears about Gamal Abdel Nasser, though the vast majority of guerilla attacks against Israel came from Palestinians in Jordan. War planning also showed Israeli desires to remake the Middle East (annexing Lebanon south of the Litani River and combining Jordan and Iraq, with Palestinian refugees settled there), along with a belief that the Sinai war would make Israel more secure because no Egyptian regime could be worse than Nasser's. However, Israeli calculations were incorrect by a wide margin, and Nasser actually strengthened his position by claiming "victory."

Many have advanced explanations for the 1967 war, including, for Idith Zertal (*Israel's Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood*, 2005), the Eichmann trial ("beyond that [Egyptian] border thousands of Eichmann's [*sic*] lie in wait") (p. 110), the diversionary theory of war (internal problems in all the belligerent states), water access issues, crisis management, and the false Soviet warnings to the Arabs about an Israeli attack. Maoz argues that the roots of the 1967 war were in the 1950s—for instance, Israel's nuclear weapons project and Israel's bellicosity in 1956. While Egypt became increasingly reckless as the crisis grew, Maoz holds that "Syria did not pose any serious strategic threat to Israel" (p. 110). The war came anyway, ultimately contributing to continuing regional insecurity. That came home to Israel in the 1973 war, when a combined Arab attack surprised Israel and killed over 3,000 Israeli soldiers in a conflict that Maoz claims was largely a consequence of Israeli diplomatic failure. While the Israelis did ultimately prevail in the 1973 war, the attack itself shocked Israel's system, and that shock would soon be magnified by Israel's incursion into Lebanon. Maoz claims that this ultimately disastrous operation occurred because of Ariel Sharon's manipulation of Prime Minister Menachim Begin's cabinet to accept the Israeli Lebanon incursion as a part of a greater effort to perpetuate Israeli control of the occupied territories and

to destroy the PLO, despite that organization's relative restraint on the Lebanese border. The operation unraveled because of the failure to anticipate negative developments (the assassination of Bashir Gemayel, the pro-Israeli Lebanese president, for example, or the Sabra-Shatilla refugee camp massacre). For Maoz, because of leadership hubris and miscalculation, Israel accomplished none of its key objectives, a conclusion that echoes in the wake of the 2006 conflict with Hezbollah.

Maoz also considers Israeli doctrines on limited force, which he argues both deterred and provoked neighboring Arabs into war—even though Israeli leaders knew that Arab regimes had not orchestrated guerilla raids against Israel for fear of Israeli reprisals. Doctrine aside, Israel was rarely able to control limited applications of force, which too often escalated into major conflicts. The Israel Defense Force (IDF) was wholly unprepared for both Palestinian intifadas and thus inflicted disproportionate casualties among Palestinian civilians, even though Israeli leaders knew that the infliction of such casualties was ineffective as a deterrent.

One of Israel's more controversial defense policy areas is its nuclear weapons capability, which Israel has kept opaque for various reasons. Maoz argues that if Israel's nuclear capacity were intended to deter adversaries, it has clearly failed to do so—witness the 1973 war, the various Palestinian uprisings, and the 2006 Hezbollah war (which came after publication). The other paradox about the Israeli nuclear program is that the more successful Israel is at hiding its existence, the less credible its deterrent effect.

Maoz also highlights Israeli efforts to interfere in Arab politics, starting with a failed effort to discredit Nasser's regime through terrorist attacks inside Egypt. Israel also tried to foment rebellions in Sudan and in Kurdish areas of Iraq against Ba'athist regimes and failed in both efforts, as did Israeli efforts to counter the PLO in the occupied territories by supporting conservative Islamists (the forerunner of Hamas). Peace-building efforts by Israel also came up short, according to Maoz, marked by a constant risk-adverse approach in dealing with potential or real adversaries. Starting with a failure to respond to Syrian peace initiatives in 1949, Maoz charts one missed opportunity after another—Egypt in 1953–54, Syria again in 1996, and the failure to reach accords with the Palestinians and the Syrians (again) during the Clinton administration. In the Palestinian case, Maoz notes that while most of the blame for failure has been heaped on Yasir Arafat, Israel must share the blame because of the continuing growth of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories and the withholding of PLO finances.

Maoz argues that some of Israel's security problems stem from the dominance of the security community in making key decisions about the use of force with little Knesset or Supreme Court oversight. The consequence for Israel is that, for Maoz, even though Israel "won" most of its wars (due largely to the incompetence of its enemies), no war has made it more secure.

This is an extraordinary book, thoroughly researched (though Israeli and Arab archives were unfortunately unavailable) and convincingly argued. It will remain a standard milepost work on Israeli security for decades to come.

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